

**Don Beauchesne (b. 1941), Senator, Metis Nation B.C.**



Don Beauchesne serves on the Elder's Council of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) in British Columbia. The following statement is from the NVIT Elder's blog:

My name is Don Beauchesne. I'm a Métis from Saskatchewan. I can speak a bit of Michif (I used to be fluent when I was a kid) and I can't dance the jig like I once could but I can give it a go now and again. My life is horses, rifles, and hunting, oh and my grandson Topper Boy. That's not his real name but that's what I call him.

I have been with NVIT for a few years now and I like sharing my hunting stories with the students or teaching them about raw hide work, which is a Métis trade. Some other things I can teach the students are 'how to make a fire without matches or a lighter' and 'how to get the human smell off you so you can camp outside for hunting and not have the bears bothering you.' I learned all of this firsthand and I wasn't taught it in the nice way I teach now. When I was first learning how to shoot, if I missed my target, my elders would give me a good hard cuff on the side of the head. I tell you I never missed very often. I actually don't remember missing ever after the first time. But you know what, I learned quickly. I was a foreman at the age of 14 for a carpentry crew.

It wasn't easy being Métis. The white people thought I was a 'lazy Indian' and didn't accept me and the Natives thought I was a 'showoff' because I would always show up early and keep to myself and they didn't accept me either. But it was just the way I was. I spent a lot of years in carpentry and even built my own house, the same house I've been living in since '81. I purposely made the ceiling height 7'6" instead of 8' to conserve energy; it's cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. Topper Boy is so proud his papa built his own house. He is like me and he's into hunting and horses too. He's 5 years old now and I'm 73 and I play with him and I mean I play with him at his level. I get down on the floor with him and play; adults don't do that enough these days. Topper plays hunting games and he comes and finds me and says 'Poppa, I shot that deer' and he has his animals lined up and says 'now we need to follow the blood trail' so off we go

following the blood trail. There's not much more to share about me other than what I've said. If you're interested in hunting, rifles, or horses than come and have a chat with me and maybe I can teach you something or you can teach me something.

Source: <https://hereforyouthenvitelders.wordpress.com/2012/03/20/elder-don-beauchesne/>

I met Don in July 2015 at Back to Batoche. He was born at Weirdale, Saskatchewan<sup>1</sup> in 1941, the son of Romeo Beauchesne and Louise Boyer. His maternal grandfather was Willie Boyer and his great-great uncle was Old Joe Boyer of St. Louis, Saskatchewan.

As noted Don's maternal grandparents were William "Willie" Boyer and Rose Schmidt of St Louis, SK. Rose Schmidt was a daughter of Louis Laferte dit Schmidt and Justine Laviolette. Willie Boyer was a son of Magloire Boyer (1862-1925) and Marguerite "Maggie" Bremner (1854-1939). Maggie Bremner was a daughter of William Bremner (1824-1887) and Maria Mary Hogue (1831-1927). Magloire Boyer was a son of Isidore Boyer (1829-1885). Isidore was born at St. François Xavier and became a resident of St. Louis, Saskatchewan. Isidore died on May 12th 1885, during the Resistance at Batoche. Isidore married Marguerite Caroline Henry dit Allary (b.1835; died after 1891)—a daughter of Michel Henry dit Allary (b.1819; died after 1892 in the Turtle Mountain District, North Dakota) and Marie Paquin dit Pocha (b. circa 1820; died after 1892 in the Turtle Mountain District, North Dakota). (Some of the genealogy information comes from the postings of Eileen Horan.)

Don told me stories that his great-great uncle Joe Boyer told of the Battle of the Grand Coteau and the fighting at Batoche in 1885. He also told a story of a women's ceremony held to honour women when they become a grandmother for the first time. He also says that at council meetings the Métis used a talking stick which appeared to be the handle of a braided riding quirt.

Elder Joseph Thomas of Traverse Bay Manitoba confirms these cultural practices.<sup>2</sup> He says that at the Grandmother's ceremony the woman was given a rose. The rose represents reciprocal love between a grandmother and a grandchild; and the thorn on the rose indicates the caution that from time to time they might do hurtful things. He notes that the braided talking sticks were sometimes braided on the baculum of a bear.



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<sup>1</sup> Weirdale is about 48 km north-east of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan along Highway 55.

<sup>2</sup> Personal communication, MMF Annual General Assembly, September 24, 2016.